

# INFORMATION REPORT    INFORMATION REPORT

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	USSR	
SUBJECT	Comments on Current Trends	REPORT
DATE OF INFO.		DATE DISTR.      7 December 1955    25X1
PLACE ACQUIRED		NO. OF PAGES      6      25X1
DATE ACQUIRED		REQUIREMENT NO.    RD      25X1
		REFERENCES      25X1
		This is UNEVALUATED Information

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE    APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE

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(Note: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#".)

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Date: 20th August 1954

U.S.S.R.PoliticalCOMMENTS ON CURRENT TRENDS

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SOVIET POLITICAL PERSONALITIES

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2. MALENKOV: Little was known about him before he came into prominence in 1953, especially as he had written few, if any, original works of a political nature. Rumours are widespread that he is now trying to carry out an internal Leninist policy, from which STALIN had deviated and that he favours a less aggressive foreign policy. This tends to increase his popularity, as a large proportion of the Soviet people still regard LENIN as the greatest revolutionary and a more sincere and humane man than STALIN was.

(Note: [ ] the association of MALENKOV with LENIN's policies may be the result of rumours spread deliberately by MALENKOV and his supporters in order to enhance his prestige.)

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3. KHRUSHCHEV: By his readiness to talk informally and without an air of condescension to the simple people, which he does during his frequent visits to State enterprises in town and country, and his apparent boldness in admitting the shortcomings in Soviet agriculture and industry, he has a strong human appeal to the workers and kolkhozniks.

4. Marshal ZHUKOV: He has always been and still is very popular with most military personnel, particularly with other ranks who regard him as the champion of their interests against overbearing government officials. Most of the civilian population, too, probably welcome his return to prominence.

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5. MOLOTOV: As he has so long been connected with foreign politics and is one of the few of the Old Guard Bolsheviks to remain in favour in an important position, the average Soviet citizen looks upon him as a permanent fixture. From this point of view, coupled with the fact that he is not believed to have any great interest or ambition in the struggle for top leadership in the Kremlin, he excites less discussion or speculation than most of the other prominent figures.

DOCTORS' PLOT

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7. When it was announced in April, 1953, that the doctors had been released [ ] the opinion expressed [ ] that the whole "Plot" had been a frame-up by RYUMIN, who was an ambitious careerist. [ ] in the eyes of the general Soviet public, the M.V.D./M.G.B. was much discredited by the above-mentioned events. At any rate, since that time and the amnesty proclaimed after STALIN's death the public has been much less afraid of the security organs and discussion of political matters has become more widespread. [ ] an instance of unabashed criticism of the M.V.D./M.G.B. [ ] in the early autumn of 1953 [ ] at a football match at the DINAMO Stadium in MOSCOW between the famous DINAMO team and some other sporting organisation, during which the former were putting up a bad show against their opponents. A section of the crowd started jeering at the DINAMO team, looking pointedly at a large group of militia-men and M.V.D. uniformed officers who were also spectators and crying out: "Look at those players. No wonder they are no

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/good at ...

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good at football, as their job is hunting criminals ("Ugolovniki")!"

(Note: [ ] the DINAMO football team is part of the DINAMO Sporting Association, which is formed entirely of members of the M.V.D. and is their official sports organisation.)

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### BERIA's ARREST

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9. [ ] BERIA's arrest from the Soviet newspapers and radio. Although few persons in the Soviet Union believed the official accusations that BERIA had been a spy for Western intelligence services, many thought he was aspiring to personal domination by gaining complete control through the M.V.D. over the Party and the Army. [ ] rumours after his arrest that soon after STALIN's death he had tried to win ZHUKOV over to his side and thereby collaborate with the Army against the Party; ZHUKOV considered that he would play only a very insignificant role should BERIA become dictator and he therefore went to KHRUSHCHEV and told him of BERIA's intentions. [ ]

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[ ] rumoured that BERIA had been plotting against BULGANIN.

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10.

[ ] It seems that many people believe the arrest was carried out entirely by high-ranking Army officers; [ ] it could not possibly have taken place without active participation of at least one senior member of the Party.

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### AMNESTY

11. [ ] there is no doubt that since the amnesty for non-political prisoners (proclaimed soon after STALIN's death) many persons have been released and have returned to their former places of residence. Most of them appear to be those who were sentenced for robbery with violence, theft, embezzlement and similar crimes. Since the amnesty there has been an undoubted

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/recrudescence ... 25X1

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recrudescence of such crimes, particularly in the provinces, but also in MOSCOW. As an instance [ ] the case of four brothers who were natives of LIKINO-DULEVO, were released from prison, and returned to their homes in the summer of 1953. Almost immediately they started robbing again and even used knives. They were soon re-arrested. Many people now blame BERDA as the person responsible for the amnesty; although in principle they may be in favour of the release of certain types of prisoners (particularly those convicted of minor political offences) they certainly think that such criminals as are now re-appearing should not have been freed.

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12. In subject's view, the fact that released criminals have quickly reverted to their life of crime is an indication that the militia, and thereby the M.V.D., is less feared than before STALIN's death. This is in no small way due to the various public criticisms which have been levelled by the Soviet press and radio at the methods alleged to have been used by the security authorities, e.g. RYKIN, IGNATYEV and the Doctors' Plot.

#### POPULARITY OF ÉMIGRÉ ARTISTS

13. In the last three to four years the famous Russian singers of gypsy and other so-called decadent songs, VERTINSKY and LESHCHENKO, who left the U.S.S.R. in the 20's or early 30's and emigrated to the West, have regained popularity. VERTINSKY is believed to have voluntarily returned to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, though little was heard of him after that.

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[ ] in KUYBYSHEV during the winter of 1951/2 [ ] widespread announcements of a concert which VERTINSKY was to hold there.

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[ ] The large audience was most enthusiastic despite the fact that VERTINSKY is now about seventy-five years old and his voice hardly of the best. Particularly the older members of the audience went into sentimental raptures when they were reminded of the days when passionate gypsy music was allowed. Although LESHCHENKO is still outside the U.S.S.R.,

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[ ] his records are listened to privately in many places. They are prominently displayed for sale in Austrian shops in the Soviet sector of VIENNA, and subject thinks that much of the increased interest in VERTINSKY,

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/LESHCHENKO and ...

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LESHCHENKO and Western-type dance music is due to the presence of the Soviet occupational forces in Germany and Austria, from where they smuggle records or music back to the U.S.S.R.

ANECDOTES

14. The following two anecdotes were circulating in the Soviet Union in 1953 after STALIN's death:

- (a) "They have abolished many ministries and amalgamated others, but there are still 300 'Zamov' (Zamestiteli-Ministry - Deputy Ministers), 300 'Zimov' ('Zim' limousines used by Ministers), 300 'Zin' and 300 'Nin'," (meaning Ministers' private secretaries - Zina and Nina are girls' names).

(This is a reference to the top-heavy Soviet bureaucracy.)

- (b) "The increased well-being of the Soviet citizen has resulted in everyone possessing two cars of his own - a "Chernyy Voron" (Soviet nickname for the Black Maria) and a "Krasnyy Krest" (ambulance)!"

RELIGIOUS FEELING

15. [redacted] strong religious feeling 25X1  
still exists among the middle-aged and elderly sections of the Soviet population, especially in the country districts, despite the fact that it is particularly in the country where churches have been pulled down or closed. The three churches in [redacted] LIKINO-DULEVO are no longer functioning, 25X1  
but many of the local inhabitants often tramp five kilometres to and from the nearest open one. They [redacted] still take 25X1  
their Easter cakes (Kulich and Paskha) there to be blessed. When this happened at Easter, 1946, some of the non-believers of the district attacked the procession and stole the cakes owing to the then prevailing shortage of food. Since then such Easter processions have been protected from possible assaults by the militia. [redacted] this illustrates the strength 25X1  
of local religious feeling which the Soviet authorities dare not ignore. 25X1

16. [redacted] 25X1